/431/

121 Fashion, from a subjective point of view, represents a fleeting custom that depends on the taste and the whims of individuals. Its range of application is universal. It is thus a social and aesthetic phenomenon of the same order as painting, from which it borrows much.

Like all expressions of art, fashion is a language and a magic. It is also a technique, the different aspects of which may be grouped in three categories: the fabrication of the objects (fabrics and garments), the methods of sale, and the motivations for the purchase.

For the social psychologist the problem of the adaptation of the African to European fashions presents itself.

125 Among the various possible methods of investigation, our choice was directed first of all to direct observations and the method of tests. We have taken into consideration both the ethnic origin and the age of the subjects.

I. Female African Population of Dakar

162 1. Resident population on 6-1-55.

We ascertained:

a) the very distinct predominance of the Wolof group (47.8%),

b) the weak representation of the Sérèr and Diola in relation to the Bambara.

/432/

2. Characteristics of this population:

[191] [212] a) Knowledge of French (14 years old and +):

4,844 women and girls speak our language (2,850 of them write it).

162 463 [294] [386] b) Salaried occupations in crafts and business (14 years old and +):

3,779, of whom: sewing, dressmaking, lingerie, clothing 609

preparation, dyeing..... 142

S /432 cont./

162 The 609 individuals who derive a profit from the
463 fashion trades are divided ethnically as follows:

[294]

Cape Verde group	243
Wolof group	157
Diola group	48
Lebou group	31
Sérèr group	29
Others	101

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[294]

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● [386] The majority of the 142 dyers are Toucouleur /Tukolar/ (77) and Wolof (36).

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[463] Out of 1,455 Wolof women practicing a trade, for their own benefit or salaried, 598 are tradeswomen, 157 in sewing, 110 business employees.

The Lébou women likewise prefer to carry on a business (150 out of 340 counted as workers).

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II. Experimental Research on the Aesthetic Sense of Dakar Women in the Matter of Clothing

For this study, which is only in its beginnings, two methods are used:

-- direct observation of clothing worn for display by a certain number of women,

-- the result of tests conducted among some of them.

/Table I appears here on an unnumbered page./

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A. Direct Observation.

1. Circumstances.

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[114] a) The investigation was conducted in the Médina of Dakar, in the quarters Sapeurs-pompiers /Firemen/ and Champ de courses /Race course/ -- between 9 and 19 November 1956, at the end of an election.

/435 cont./

291 in vivid and distinct colors on an indigo background, without overlappings.

[288] -- the presence in Dakar of an industry which manufactures "guinées" /cotton cloth/ and "sucretons";

[386] -- the survival of a traditional craft of dyers that still had 142 representatives in 1955.

The family of maroons takes second place (18.09% of the boubous and 18.21% of the whole).

In third place we find the violets and mauves, and in practically the same place the whites (about 11% in each category).

b) Classical African style:

-- Clothing for display, the mboubeu (1), or boubou,

[192]

1. Boubou is an incorrect pronunciation of the Wolof term mboubeu = woman's clothing in general, a full simple tunic.

[177] is always in favor (4,002 as against 770 garments of European inspiration, 83.86% as against 16.14%).

-- But in this category the Wax and Fancy printed fabrics are in regression (1,675 = 41.85% as against 2,412 = 56.52%).

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177 c) Style of European inspiration:

-- The taille-basse, a kind of blouse that terminates at the waist in a circular flounce 20 to 25 centimeters wide, is combined either with a draped loincloth /pagne, a long strip of material/ or a sewed skirt. Most often the two pieces are made of the same material.

It is worn especially by the young girls (out of 52 women tested, 40 young girls, 25 of whom habitually wore tailles-basses).

-- The dress, worn by women of fashion in African life, is long in 99% of the cases.